

Research Paper

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Defining a peace-enforcing mandate in reference to North Korea

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Background

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, also known as North Korea, is an East Asian country laying in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. On the north side, it borders Russia and China. On the south it borders South Korea – its proclaimed enemy and an important U.S ally. North Korea is an isolated, totalitarian regime. The country possesses nuclear weapons and a staggering number of 7.769 million military and paramilitary personnel, which constitutes for around 30% of its population and makes it the country with the second highest number of military personnel in the world. The constant nuclear armament and tests, along with the unpredictable and often hostile actions of the country's leader, make the situation on the Korean Peninsula a global crisis.

The current crisis can be traced back to the Korean War of the early 1950s in which the United States supported the South Korean forces against the communist forces in the north, who were aided militarily by China and the Soviet Union. The war was an attempt by Kim Il-sung, the then supreme leader of North Korea, to unify Korea under the communist regime of the country. The fighting ended on 27 July 1953 when the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed. The agreement created the Korean Demilitarized Zone on the border separating North and South Korea. However, no actual peace treaty was ever signed, and the two Koreas are technically still at war, engaged in a frozen conflict. In April 2018, the leaders of North and South Korea met at the Demilitarized Zone and agreed to work toward a treaty to formally end the Korean War.

Current state of North Korea

In violation of UN Security Council resolutions, North Korea continues nuclear weapon armament and development efforts. Although the scale of North Korea's uranium enrichment program remains uncertain, U.S. intelligence agencies estimate that it has enough plutonium to produce at least six nuclear weapons, and possibly up to sixty.

In recent years North Korea has conducted numerous nuclear weapons tests, the last one having taken place in November 2017, when the country launched an intercontinental ballistic missile that experts believe could potentially reach the continental United States.

Various nations have undertaken efforts to limit the nuclear danger posed by the DPRK. The United States has deployed an anti-missile system in the Seongju region of South Korea, one hundred and fifty-five miles from the northern border. The US, South Korea and Japan have each imposed individual sanctions on the country's high – ranking officials, government and companies involved in the nuclear development. In 2017 the UN Security Council passed the harshest sanctions yet, targeting the most important sources of revenue for the regime. The sanctions were imposed in response to the launch of the second intercontinental ballistic missile in August 2017.

On June 12th, 2018, the first ever meeting between the leaders of North Korea and the United States took place in Singapore, which resulted in both sides agreeing to work towards denuclearization.

On February 27th, 2019, another summit took place in Vietnam, where then U.S president Donald Trump again met with North Korea's supreme leader Kim Jong-un. The summit ended unexpectedly on the 28th of February, due to North Korea's demands to end all sanctions, which the United States would not settle for.

Concerns

Due to North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons, the prevention of an interstate Korean war, as well as any other possible conflicts involving the country, is critical for international security. The North Korean provocations, such as continuous missile tests and cyber-attacks, only pose a risk of further escalation of the situation in the region. The isolation of North Korea and the country's highly centralized government are also a concern, as they impede any negotiations or insight into the situation in the country. The human rights violations in North Korea are also extremely concerning, with organizations such as the UN, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch concluding that the scale of the violations is unmatched by any other country in the contemporary world.

Possible solutions

- Imposing further sanctions on the regime
- Arranging peace talks aiming at denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula
- Establishing dialogue between DPRK and South Korea